

SPSO decision report

Case: 201704503, West Lothian Council
Sector: local government
Subject: nursery and pre-school
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the council's decision not to offer her daughter a funded place at a private nursery. She had a number of concerns about the way her funding application had been handled. When she submitted the application, two out of three of her choices were unavailable but the council did not communicate that to Mrs C in their acknowledgement letter. A few months later Mrs C received a letter from the council advising that her daughter had been granted an afternoon place at the nursery class identified as first choice on the application form. When Mrs C contacted the council to let them know this was not suitable because of her working hours, she was not given advice on how to apply for funding at a nursery with suitable provision, despite requesting it.

We did not find any evidence that the council had failed to follow their policy when allocating places at the nursery, but we did consider that their handling of the application at the initial stage was poor and that their communication could have been clearer. We, therefore, upheld this complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise for the shortcomings in their communication.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Staff handling nursery funding applications should provide the opportunity for alternative choices to be made, in the event that they cannot offer the applicant's choices.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.